Exploring How The Features Of Animated Character Designs Enhance Visual Storytelling

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the relationship between the features of animated character designs and their inevitable role in enhancing the visual storytelling. Animated movies and their visual attractiveness and captivating nature are often studied and discussed. Still, the elements that are used in a character design, like colour, shape, silhouette, proportions, facial features, etc, have not been extensively studied. The research explores how the character designs visually communicate the meaning of narrative, emotional arcs, communicate personality traits, and character transformations throughout the story to the audience. This study adopts a qualitative method using a semiotic analysis method that applies formal, contextual, and comparative analysis to study a variety of animated characters and their features from diverse narration styles and roles. The research tried to understand the core ideas used by the creators to convey their plot, personality, and narrative progression, and the narrative role of the characters to the audience through the effective utilization of these features. The research bridges the gap in the studies related to animated character design and visual storytelling, alongside providing insights through practical demonstration to understand the visual narration process and patterns more effectively to convey the right meaning. Findings of the study state that the features of character designs convey the story, and emotions associated with them to the audience. Beyond aesthetic choices, these features function as tools for visual storytelling, which will help to convey the ideas through appearance and movements even when no dialogues are used.

Keywords: Character Design, Visual Storytelling, Semiotics, Animation, Colour Psychology, Shape Language, Narrative Meaning, practical demonstrations.

1. INTRODUCTION

Animated films have always driven the imagination of audiences by connecting appealing visuals and powerful narratives. In these films, the design of animated characters plays an irreplaceable role, which is not just creating vibrant and aesthetically pleasing designs whereas it also must convey the inner layers that are embedded in the story through their visual designs. The study focuses on understanding how the features of character designs function as effective storytelling tools, also examines how these features function as semiotic tools that help the audience to interpret the meaning that the design conveys. Few characters are analysed for the study, which ranges from the roles of protagonists to antagonists and secondary characters as well, where each character plays distinct roles in serving the narrative purpose and is chosen for having visual symbolism, purpose-driven in the story progression, and emotional connectivity. From the moment an animated character appears on the screen, it majorly communicates the ideas through their visual appearance more than any other aspect, and each feature suggests a different meaning, emotion, or personality trait. This paper highlights how visual design choices of the features of character design become a communicating language, which will help the audience to anticipate the significance of the character and the story. In character construction, the visual design functions as a narrative device. The colours, shapes, proportions, and silhouettes, etc, used in a character set an emotional tone that describe the plot without any verbal language. Traditionally, character design was considered an artistic and technical craft; meanwhile, these designs offer invaluable insights into the visual appeal and narration. Despite the significance of elements or each feature being known, the studies related to them in effective storytelling remain limited.

Mainly, studies are carried out related to the communicative potential of the design, related to the plot, dialogue, and other aspects of the medium. Most of them generalize the character design as style or appeal rather than understanding is interpretative storytelling functionality with constantly evolving semiotic visual elements. This presents a gap that this research focuses on; it studies how these features of character designs in animation, like shape, silhouette, and posture, are used creatively to enhance the narrative. This study proposes that the animated character designs are far beyond the surface level of visual appeal, instead, they portray the character's identity, narrative functions, and the emotional journey. The paper focuses on the semiotic method of analysis by comprehending the meaning of each feature that has been utilized in the curation of the chosen character.

The medium used for animated storytelling gives more freedom for a level of exaggeration than any other media can easily portray and gets the audience to connect with them. The animated character designs are expected to be comprehendible the very moment the audience see them, and they usually derive perceptions about the characters personality from the cues like, villain character are often given angular features, with dark colours high contrast might be expressed with asymmetry which can display the cunningness and danger, in contrary the protagonist characters are built using warm colour tones, symmetrical proportions and soft edges to signal the openness and innocent giving an optimistic feel to the viewers. These are the tools that are used to give perceptions to the audience about the character subconsciously, using the appropriate elements signifying the desired emotion to be represented in the story.

Tall, narrow frame, serpentine posture, and sharp facial features of the character Jafar from the Disney movie Aladdin (1992) all display his cunning and manipulative traits. His black and red colour palette evokes danger and power, while his curved staff symbolically mirrors the hypnotic control that he exerts over others. But if we consider a protagonist character design, Moana (Moana, 2016) is designed with rounded features, natural textures, and earthy colours that emphasize her compassion and personal growth. These design features depict the idea of their role in narration and shaping the perception of the audience in the way the story demands for a better narration. When we investigate the history of character design in animation, they have evolved into better tools for storytelling. Studios like Disney,

Pixar, DreamWorks, etc have developed their shape languages and colour theories that correlate the character design features and narrative roles. Books like The Illusion of Life by Thomas and Johnston (1981) have laid foundational principles and works like Bancroft's Creating Characters with Personality (2006) guide visual character appeal. This research builds on such foundational concepts.

The core research question of this study is: How do the features of animated character designs enhance visual storytelling? This question is approached semiotically, where each feature is considered as a sign that holds a connotative meaning. For example, a character with large expressive eyes can symbolize openness or innocence, whereas asymmetry can imply complexity or internal conflicts within the character. These features guide the perception of the audience and their anticipation of any transformation in the story.

This research study uses a qualitative approach using semiotic analysis, with the support of a practical demonstration, and examines how the features of design support storytelling across multiple styles of animated characters. The study is enriched using case studies in the analysis, and characters are chosen from Western animated films, where the character represents a different role within the narrative, to demonstrate how each design choice and combination contributes to the character development and storytelling. The practical-based study and demonstration serve as an experimental approach that helps in the application of the theoretical frameworks, which we observed in the study of a character designed for a narrative. The significance of this research is its potential to bridge the gap between the design theory and narration. Most of the character designs created have emotional and symbolic meanings, but the academic frameworks related to the function of visual features are still underdeveloped. This study contributes to that framework by following a systematic method through semiotic analysis and diverse case studies.

In conclusion, the animated character designs are the primary language through which meaning is made in the story. This research reiterated that each design feature contributes significantly to the narrative, which holds the power to guide the perception of the audience, develop relatability and emotional connections, and shape the arc of the story. Through careful visual analysis and theory-informed practice, this paper repositions character design as an essential storytelling tool in animation.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Visual narratives: Storytelling in the digital age

Stevie Dutson's thesis explores the evolution and components of visual narratives in animated films. The study emphasises how animation has evolved from small, simple devices to advanced digital narratives. The research delves into the psychological aspects of how the different visual features like colour, shape, etc, affect the perception of the audience and what impression and conclusion they will derive with just the aesthetics and no other means. This aligns with the semiotic theories where visual sign conveys meanings beyond what they denote. This thesis highlights the importance of understanding the elements that comprise the entire visual and how they impact the narration. The study includes a practical framework, which can function as a guide for the present research, where it's analysed how variety of features over the same concept can create different impacts according to the respective feature used, like an angular and rounded facial structure, which can convey different meanings. This study serves as a valuable framework for semiotic analysis in character design by examining how they function as storytelling tools. The gap that the present research can cover is that Duston's study is not character design-focused, lacks semiotic case studies, and doesn't include role-based character comparisons.

2.2. Semiotic Analysis of the Animation Film Soul.

Islam and İncirkuş apply semiotic theory to analyse Pixar's animated film Soul in this research. The study focuses on the protagonist Joe Gardeners ' journey of life, ten scenes from the movie are examined and analysed denotatively and connotatively. The study communicates themes such as the search for life's meaning and the acknowledgement of everyday joy through its visual storytelling. The character designs are studied, and the study shows how the visual elements are used as signifiers to communicate the ideas of the story. The analysis gives an understanding of how the semiotic elements enhance storytelling. The gap found is that the study focuses only on scene analysis, and the features of character designs are not specifically analysed; the influence on the audience is also not discussed widely in the paper. Overall, the research offers insights into the semiotic mechanism of animated storytelling.

2.3. Finding "Appeal" Factors in Local Animation Character Design: Formalistic and Visual Semiotic Analysis (FVSA).

The study explores the appeal factor in local animated character designs. The authors integrated formalistic theory with visual semiotic analysis to study design elements that are relatable to viewers in a structured way. Provides a structured framework for the designers to implement the appeal factor in character creation. It reinforces the importance of understanding the audience's perception in the design. The study does not delve deeply into the narrative function of the character design and how it contributes to storytelling. The paper provides insights to enhance character appeal through formalistic semiotic analysis.

2.4. The Emotional Impact of Animation on Its Audience.

Zhangchun Cai's study delves into the multifaceted ways in which animation influences audience emotions and examines the integration of visual, auditory, and narrative elements. The paper discusses in detail how colour schemes, character designs, soundscapes, and storytelling techniques collectively control an audience's emotional relatability and response. The study refers to psychological theories to understand the mechanism through which the audience relates to the characters. The study highlights the significance of narrative structures in crafting emotionally relatable stories. The research also provides a comprehensive study of the emotional impact of animation. The study lacks detailed character design analysis or feature study, it lacks comparative case studies to understand different animated works. The research study deeply researched the psychology of audience engagement, and the theories related to storytelling, along with the aesthetic choices of design.

2.5. Semiotic Analysis of Women's Representation in the Animated Disney Film Raya and The Last Dragon.

The study explores the representation of women in Disney's animated film Raya and the Last Dragon through the lens of Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. The authors identify four themes: trust in women as leaders, emphasis on friendship over romance, depiction of a formidable kingdom led by women, and portrayal of brave female warriors. The analysis underscores how the film challenges the often-depicted traditional gender roles and stereotypes by presenting women as strong, independent, and central to the narrative. The visual elements, such as clothing, symbolise culture. The study highlights the film for showcasing female characters who drive the story forward without reliance on male counterparts, which

creates an iconic character design. The research focuses on symbolic analysis of the key moments of the film and does not delve deeply into the features or semiotics of the character design features and no comparative analysis is offered. Overall, the study contributed to the detailed analysis of a strong female protagonist character framework as a narrative tool.

2.6.Psychology in Character Design: Creation of a Character Design Tool

In this thesis, Marika Nieminen explores the integration of psychological principles into character design. The research deeply understands the theories from psychoanalysis and social psychology, focusing on concepts such as the unconscious, motivation, conflict, and backstory. They are highly linked to visual design aspects, highlighting how the internal traits can be showcased externally through design elements. It involved the development of a tool to assist creators in incorporating psychological depth into their character designs. The gap is that the study focuses more on developing a design tool rather than providing a detailed feature of character design analysis. The study reinforces the need to understand psychological considerations in character design and provides a practical resource for designers to create more nuanced characters.

2.7.Integration of the Visual Elements of Art and Personality Factors in the Process of Character Design.

The study examines the intersection of visual elements and psychological factors associated with them, in the context of video games. The author states the importance of elements like facial features, lines, body postures, colours, and how they contribute to the narration and how the audience associates personality traits with them. The study also discusses how each feature could be used to navigate the expected emotional characteristic traits ok the character. The gap observed in the research is that it lacks case studies to substantiate the theoretical statements. The study provides information on how to create emotionally relatable characters to which the audience can connect.

2.8.Investigation of Shapes and Colours as Elements of Character Design.

Through this study, Elise Fogelström explores how shapes and colours act as core elements in character design. The objective is to understand how the culture, age, and gender affect the perception of elements like shape and colour in the designs. For the conduct of the study, the author conducts a quantitative analysis of different character designs. The finding proves that certain shapes and colours are generally associated with specific character traits, while others are interpreted differently across cultural and demographic scales. The study highlights the importance of considering a diverse audience to ensure that the character traits expected to be conveyed are inclusive in the design created. The identified gap in the research is that the study does not explore more features than shapes or colours, also lacks associated case studies of character designs. Overall study emphasised the importance of shapes and colours and considering audience perception for creating a captivating character design.

2.9. Perception of Visual Semiotics in Cartoon Character Design for Advertising.

This study investigates how visual semiotics are perceived in cartoon character design for advertising, using a sample of 151 adult participants. This research demonstrates that demographic variables such as gender, age, and education level affect how the audience interprets the character traits through visual elements. Although the study is based on advertising, it remains relevant to storytelling since it

reinforces the idea of character design, and its features carry meaning that the audience relates to. This supports the semiotic framework of the present study. The research is limited since there is no breakdown of the character design features in terms of storytelling functionality.

2.10. Designing Animated Characters for Children of Different Ages.

This study examines the relationship between stylistic elements of animated characters and the target age groups. Through qualitative and quantitative analysis of the existing media, the researchers found that character designs focusing on children as their target audience typically feature large heads, large eyes, and rounded features. While assessing children's preference through the survey and character creation did not give any age-specific difference, which shows a disconnect between the actual children's choices and trends that are followed in design for their age. The study focusing on facial features aligns with the semiotic framework in the present research, and the study is also centered on how the design elements are perceived so that it can enhance the storytelling for a specific audience. The research has certain gaps that it doesn't delve into how these design elements function in a storytelling arc and lacks the emotional and psychological impact that the features can create across age groups. While the study offers information related to age-related preferences in character designs, this study can also impact the present study by providing findings that can be incorporated to enhance the semiotic analysis.

2.11. Storyboard to Story: Animation Content Development.

The study introduces an approach that is the inverse of the conventional method of writing a script and then creating a storyboard. This shows how visuals serve story structure. The study focuses on narrative building through images, and the observed gap is that it doesn't focus on specific character design elements but on narration and efficiency brought by visualizing initially. The research supports the present study by claiming that visually storytelling is an effective narrative tool. The symbolism of characters or visual elements is not given focus but helps us understand the visual aid in story construction.

2.12. Character Design of Antagonists in Local 3D Animation

This thesis examines how the features of character design, like shape, colour, silhouette, etc, help in communicating the desired personality of the character. The study utilizes theories like colour theory, shape language to analyse how these aspects convey the idea behind the character traits to the audience. The idea of the study, where the visual elements contributing to the meaning that it creates, especially the antagonist's design, gives insight about specific feature-centric perceptions from the audience, aligns with the motive of semiotic analysis, making it a relevant reference for the present study. The observed gap in the study is that the narrative perspective is not correlated with the study.

2.13. Learning Character Design from Experts and Laymen.

The research study explores how proportion and pose convey characteristic traits such as role, physicality, and personality in character design. The authors have developed a model that maps visual features into perceived traits, while the study offers valuable insights into the correlation between visual elements and character perception by collecting feedback from experts and through a game-based approach. The identified gaps in the study are that it does not delve deeply into the storytelling context,

and a limited focus is given to the symbolism of the features that are explored in the study. The present research can utilize this insight about how the perception aligns with each feature of the design.

2.14. Arts education and visual communication in the character design of the Nusa Five serial comic character by Sweta Kartika.

In the study, Aditia and Aditia explore the role of arts education and visual communication in the creation of characters. The authors explore how the specific character design features, such as shape, colour, and texture, are used to express the personality, cultural identity, and emotion in the narratives. This study is relevant to the recent study as it includes the semiotic function of character design, where specific features communicate deeper meaning about the narrative context, emotional aspects, etc. The article's study about the visual communication principles gives an informative framework for understanding the perception created by the elements. Particularly about the story and context.

2.15. The Illusion of Life: Disney Animation.

In the book The Illusion of Life, Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston provide a look into the art and techniques that are behind Disney animation. The gives deep insights into character design and the principles that bring characters to life with the stories of how the process was carried out by the artists in the Disney studio and how the iconic characters we know took their form through an immense evolution of design experiments. This text examines all the important features, such as shape language, proportions, silhouettes, and facial expressions, and their role in creating emotionally resonant characters that can potentially drive the story and create an impact on the audience. The application of animation principles in the process of creating character design is also explained over its use in animating them to increase the audience engagement in storytelling. Through detailed examples and case studies, the book serves as a guide to Disney's golden age. It signifies how each element of the design conveys the personality trait and serves the narration. This comprehensive explanation in the book supports the current study by reinforcing the semiotic analysis framework, which will deepen the understanding of enhancing storytelling.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative approach, which is specifically focused on the semiotic analysis method. The study examines how animated character designs visually communicate the meaning of narrative through each design element. This framework utilises the classic semiotic concepts established by the theorists, including Ferdinand de Saussure and Roland Barthes, where signs consist of a signifier (the visual element) and the signified (the associated meaning) (Saussure, 1916/2011; Barthes, 1977). This delves deep into the features such as colour, shape, proportion, facial features, and silhouette that function as signs that signify the character's personality, emotional tone, and story progression.

3.1. SEMIOTIC FRAMEWORK:

● Ferdinand de Saussure's Signifier and Signified: According to Saussure's theory, the signifier is the visual feature (e.g., shape, colour, proportion) that conveys a meaning, while the signified is the concept or narrative idea it represents. For example, the angular shapes represent villainy or danger, while rounded shapes may represent approachability and warmth. By analysing these features, the study decodes the semiotic function of the features of character designs (Saussure, 1916/2011).

- Roland Barthes' Denotation and Connotation: Barthes' distinction between denotation that is the literal meaning of the visual element and connation which is the symbolic meaning of these elements, will be used to study how the features can convey multiple layers of meaning embedded in the design of a character, e.g.: a character's red costume may denote energy or passion but its connotation can signify a deeper narrative function like a conflict or love (Barthes, 1977).

These concepts are critical in understanding how audiences decode design cues and subconsciously assign narrative roles to characters. Together, these theories guide this research to reveal the visual features of animated character design that convey symbols that communicate internal traits, emotional aspects, and narrative progression.

Semiotic Analysis Process:

To explore how the features of animated characters enhance storytelling, this study will conduct a semiotic analysis of six animated characters. The visual features chosen for the analysis are:

- **Shape:** the fundamental element in a character design, which gives a basic outline and structure of the design to understand the personality of the character. (Thomas & Johnston, 1981).
- **Colour:** The palette used for each aspect of the character design is examined to understand how it signifies traits such as warmth, coldness, etc. (Miketić, Pinćjer, & Lilić, 2020).
- **Silhouette:** The overall outline of the character, to understand the emotional stance and narrative significance. (Bancroft, 2006).
- **Facial Features:** The elements of the face, like eye size, brow shape, mouth curvature, etc, determine the emotional expressiveness and psychological depth. (Tillman, 2011).
- **Proportion:** the size of specific features and how they relate to the rest of the features indicates the character's narrative role. (Bancroft, 2006).

The analysis will be conducted in three levels:

- **Formal analysis:** In the semiotic context, it is the denotation of design features, involving describing the visible aspects of the character design (shape, colour, silhouette, proportion, and facial features). The features with their denoted and connoted meanings are analysed in a tabular format.
- **Contextual analysis:** In the semiotic context, it is the connotation, the visual features are described, and the connotative meaning will be explored. This section explains the relevance of the character design according to the storyline.
- **Comparative Analysis:** The design features of different characters across multiple narrative roles are compared and analysed. By comparing the design of protagonists, antagonists, and secondary characters, the study will highlight recurring patterns and contrasts that reinforce the narrative role and their personalities throughout.

The characters chosen for the semiotic analysis are:

The animated characters chosen for the study are based on their significant design features and their roles in the respective narratives. The characters chosen to represent diverse roles like protagonists, antagonists, and secondary characters from well-known animated films across different genres from the western animation studios. The selection understands the wide range of design elements to analyse and compare, focusing on key visual traits like shape, colour, silhouette, facial features, and proportions.

Miguel Rivera (Coco) – Protagonist

Moana Waialiki (Moana) – Protagonist

Jafar (Aladdin) – Villain

Mother Gothel (Tangled) – Villain

Sadness (Inside Out) – Secondary Character

Baymax (Big Hero 6)– Secondary Character

3.2.PRACTICE-BASED STUDY:

As a part of the deeper understanding of the study, a practice-based study component will be included to apply the insights gained from the research. This will involve the creation of an original character, applying the information from the semiotic study of six diverse characters. The aim is to demonstrate how the features of animated character design are crafted to enhance storytelling.

4. ANALYSIS:

4.1.FORMAL ANALYSIS:

Each character is analysed based on key visual features: shape, colour, proportion, facial features, and silhouette, using a semiotic framework to decode how each constructs meaning. This includes denotation and connotation levels, demonstrating how surface-level visual traits convey deeper meanings relevant to storytelling.

Each character is analysed using individual tables to ensure clarity.

4.1.1. MIGUEL RIVERA (COCO)

Figure 1: Miguel Rivera.

Table 1: Semiotic table for the character design features of Miguel Rivera.

Feature	Denotation	Connotation
Shape	Round face, large circular eyes, and curved limbs.	Youthful, innocent, curious
Colour	Red hoodie, blue jeans, and warm skin tones.	Earthy, culturally rooted, passionate
Silhouette	Compact, slightly triangular with a large head, thin limbs, and a rounded upper body tapering into slim legs.	Lightness, creativity, musical identity
Facial Features	He has big eyes, thick eyebrows, a small nose, and visible freckles.	Emotive, relatable, open-hearted
Proportion	A relatively large head compared to his body, short limbs, and slightly oversized hands and feet.	Emphasises his age, vulnerability, and room for growth

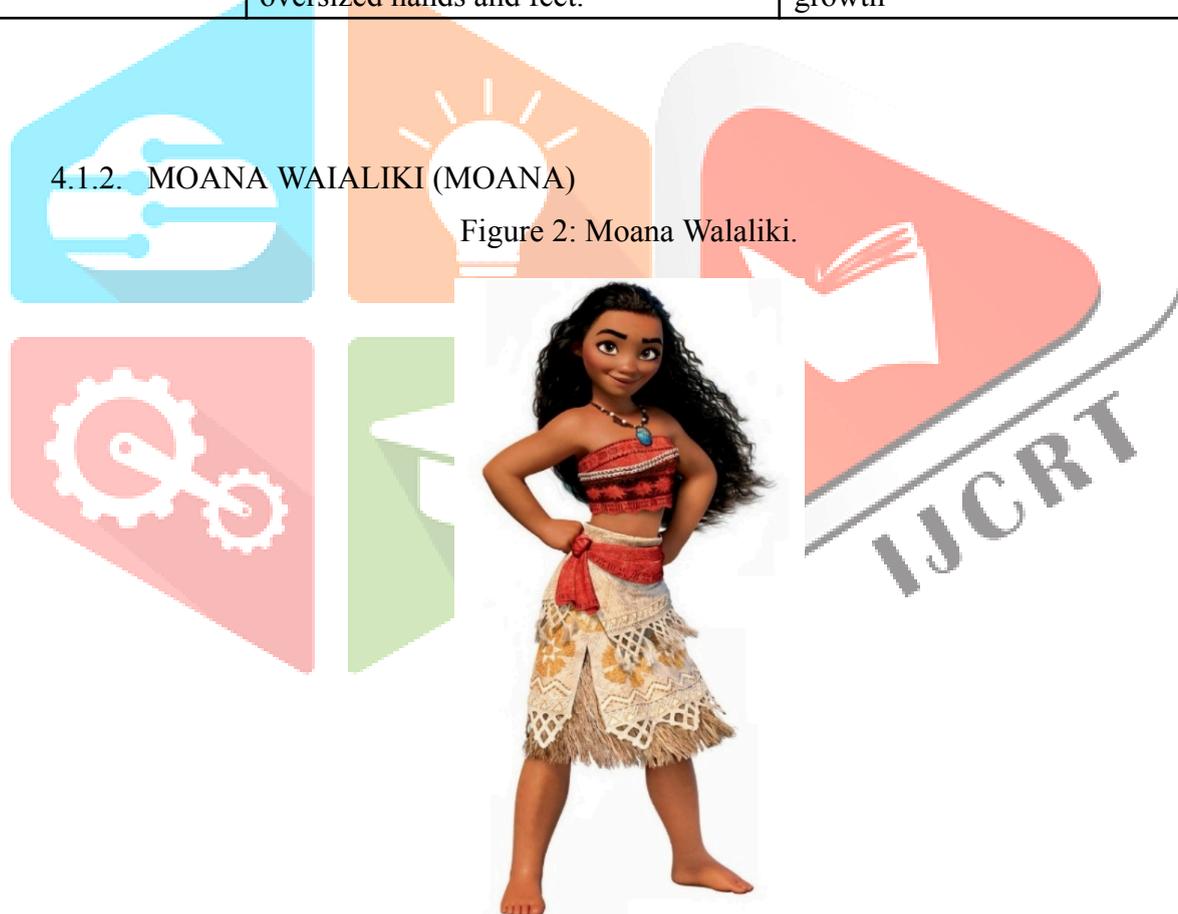### 4.1.2. MOANA WAIALIKI (MOANA)

Figure 2: Moana Walaliki.

Table 2: Semiotic table for the character design features of Moana Walaliki.

Feature	Denotation	Connotation
Shape	Soft, rounded, but strong build	Strength and compassion
Colour	Warm, earthy tones (tan skin, red costume)	Connection to nature and heritage
Silhouette	Broad stance, grounded posture	Lightness, creativity, musical identity

| Facial Features | Wide eyes, full brows, natural look | Honest, authentic, emotionally expressive |
| Proportion | Realistic and athletic | Represents relatability and empowerment |

4.1.3. JAFAR (ALADDIN)

Figure 3: Jafar.

Table 3: Semiotic table for the character design features of Jafar.

Feature	Denotation	Connotation
Shape	Angular, sharp edges	Villainous, cunning, dangerous
Colour	Deep red and black robe	Power, seduction, evil
Silhouette	Tall, narrow, extended shoulders	Manipulative
Facial Features	Long face, sharp nose, goatee	Deceitful, untrustworthy
Proportion	Elongated limbs and fingers	Snake-like, fearful presence

4.1.4. MOTHER GOTHEL (TANGLED)

Figure 4: Mother Gothel.

Table 4: Semiotic table for the character design features of Mother Gothel.

Feature	Denotation	Connotation
Shape	Curvy, flowing shapes	Disguise of warmth hiding selfishness.
Colour	Deep red and gold	Seductive, manipulative, luxurious facade
Silhouette	Elegant with a sweeping gown	Theatrical, performative persona
Facial Features	Arched eyebrows, seductive eyes	Concealing true motives, vanity
Proportion	Tall, exaggerated feminine form	Mysterious and seductive intentions.

4.1.5. SADNESS (INSIDE OUT)

Figure 5: Sadness.

Table 5: Semiotic table for the character design features of Sadness.

Feature	Denotation	Connotation
Shape	Round, drooping shape	Fragility, softness
Colour	Muted blue	Emotional depth, empathy
Silhouette	Small, hunched figure	Withdrawn, timid
Facial Features	Large glasses, small mouth	Thoughtful, non-assertive, observant
Proportion	Short limbs, large head	Childlike sensitivity

4.1.6. BAYMAX (BIG HERO 6)

Figure 6: Baymax.

Table 6: Semiotic table for the character design features of Baymax.

Feature	Denotation	Connotation
Shape	Rounded, Soft	Comforting, gentle presence
Colour	Pure white body with black dots connected by a line	Medical professionalism, neutrality, peace
Silhouette	Simple silhouette with no harsh angles	Safety and protective role
Facial Features	Two black dots connected by a single line, no mouth or expressive features	Emotional neutrality, calmness
Proportion	Oversized body, small head, short limbs	Child-like, caregiving nature

4.2. CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS:

This section connects character design features with their narrative role, personality trait and resonance with the story, a detailed connotation of the character features.

4.2.1. MIGUEL RIVERA:

Shape:

Miguel's design uses rounded, soft shapes to reflect his innocence, youth, and warmth. These shapes symbolise that he is still in the growing phase, and emotionally open, and these traits can represent a character who challenges his family's traditions and seeks his own identity. These shapes make him look approachable and help the audience empathise with his journey from being a misunderstood child to becoming a bridge between generations.

Colour:

The red hoodie signifies his passion for music, determination and emotional intensity he holds in the story, which is the constant drive for his passion. The white t-shirt symbolises Miguel's openness to self-discovery and truth. In the cultural context, it can also be linked to spiritual connection or honouring the dead. It is a base beneath the bold read, which represents his pure passion for music rooted in love and truth, and not a rebellion. The blue jeans signify normalcy and humility. The brown shoes reflect his cultural and economic background of a humble family in a rural Mexican heritage.

Silhouette:

His compact silhouette, frequently holding a guitar, is simple yet iconic. portrays Miguel's personality as an ordinary boy with a big dream. The forward lean and open stance signify curiosity, openness, and willingness to explore without considering any risk factor. The silhouette shows energy and expressiveness.

Facial features:

Miguel's big and expressive eyes, rounded face and soft features symbolise a child-like, innocent nature and determination; these features support his emotional journey, where he is striving for his dream and awe of new discoveries. His face is highly expressive throughout the happenings.

Proportion:

With a slightly big head relative to the body, the proportions reflect his childhood nature, reinforcing how small he seems in the world of expectations and ancestral traditions. As he travels through the land of the dead, his body proportions become symbolic of resilience and youth.

4.2.2. MOANA WAIALIKI:

Shape:

Moana's design is comprised of natural, curved, and balanced shapes that communicate her close bond with nature and emotional strength. The rounded features show harmony and adaptability that relate to her role as a voyager and problem solver. The rounded shapes evoke approachability and an empathetic nature that is suitable for a leader.

Colour:

Moana's colour palette has earthy tones reds, greens, blues and browns, which reflect her close relation to nature. Her red top signifies passion and leadership, while her beige skirt depicts her island culture, the aqua blue in accessories symbolises her connection with the ocean, suggesting a culturally rooted but destined to voyage character.

Facial features:

Moana's big eyes, bold eyebrows convey empathy and confidence in her. Her features are not overly exaggerated or stylised; it is kept natural, which enhances her relatability and strength.

Proportions:

Moana's proportions are realistic and athletic, which is distinct from the traditional Disney heroines. This emphasises her independence and physical strength, which is related to her personality as a voyager and cultural leader.

Silhouette:

Her silhouette is easily identifiable, with long wavy hair and her costume. The natural curve of her silhouette resembles ocean waves and island terrain. Her stance and the entire silhouette express bravery, openness, and independence. It supports her identity as a Wayfinder and future leader through strong lines.

4.2.3. JAFAR:

Shape:

Jafar's design is dominated by angular shapes, long verticals and sharp curves, which usually connotes villainism. His shapes contradict those of the smooth shapes of protagonists like Aladdin and the sultan. The elongated and pointed shapes evoke a snake-like quality, his tall, narrow design gives him an imposing, predatory presence that symbolises dominance.

Colour:

The colour palette consists of black, red and gold, which are classic colours used in the design of villains. Blak signifies mystery, secrecy and evil intentions, while deep red connotes is thirst for power

and the danger associated with it. Gold connects to his greed for wealth and status. These colours contrast highly with the light tones used in Aladdin's design and reflect his corruption. His colours align with those of dark and authoritative figures.

Silhouette:

Jafar's silhouette is easily recognisable and villainous with sharp shoulder spikes, serpentine staff and headdress. This outline suggests the danger in his personality. The tapered shape and pointed lines in his silhouette depict his villainous and unapproachable nature, which is exactly what relates to his role as a magical and manipulative antagonist of the story.

Facial features:

Jafar's face is stylised with narrow eyes and crooked eyebrows, a long-hooked nose, and a thin twisted beard, these are all classic indicators of deception. His raised eyebrows and mouth signify manipulation, superiority and arrogance. His facial feature lacks warmth or emotional relatability. These features help the audience not to trust the character, even before he acts or says dialogue.

Proportions:

He is tall and lean unnaturally, with exaggerated limbs and neck, giving him a predatory look. His disproportionately large headdress and shoulder pads exaggerate his authority and ego; these proportions make him appear powerful, especially in scenes where he towers over Aladdin or manipulates the sultan.

4.2.4. MOTHER GOTHEL:

Shape:

Mother Gothel's design has both soft and sharp angles that reflect the duality in her personality, that is, a motherly affection on the surface and cunning inside. The curvy shapes of her costume and hair evoke femininity and charm, which she uses to manipulate Rapunzel emotionally, the slight angularity gives the hint of control and threat.

Colour:

The colour palette includes deep maroon, dark red, and black, all suggesting seduction, vanity, secrecy and danger, the rich crimson depicts her obsession with eternal youth and beauty which also shows selfishness, the black element in her attire shows darkness masked in warmth, these colours strongly contrast worth that of Rapunzel's bright palette, symbolising their contrasting nature in the narrative.

Silhouette:

A tall, flowing figure with big curly hair is dramatic and connotes her as a manipulating figure who fakes motherhood. Her body shape reinforces the classic villainy traits, giving her both grandeur and dread. The silhouette is elegant, which thoughtfully masks her toxic, authoritative nature, filled with selfishness.

Facial features:

Her heavily lidded eyes, defined cheekbones, and mouth suggest the personality of someone who is self-obsessed. Her expressions often flicker between fake affection and superiority, which conveys her manipulative characteristics. Her arched eyebrows and long lashes visually exaggerate her dramatic personality, which makes her look untrustworthy.

Proportions:

Her proportions are realistic adult proportions with slight stylisation. The shape of her body is hourglass type and flowing limbs communicates her vanity. Her proportions, when compared to Rapunzel's youthful figure, emphasise her ageing and desperation to remain eternally young.

4.2.5. SADNESS:

Shape:

Saddest is composed of entirely soft rounded shapes, from her circular head, chubby body, to her oval glasses, which connoted her gentleness, fragility, and emotional softness. Her roundedness suggests a lack of any aggression. Visually evokes empathy and tenderness, which strongly aligns with her narrative role to slow things down and express emotional depth.

Colour:

Her monochromatic blue palette is an immediate and universal symbol of sadness and melancholy. Multiple shades of blue across the elements signify her emotional state and sorrow, with the narrative progression of blue also suggesting connection, sincerity, and emotional truth. When other characters understand the value of sadness, the colour takes on a more essential role.

Facial Features:

Sadness design has large, round eyes and oversized glasses, which represent her thoughtful and observant nature. Her downturned mouth and heavily lidded eyes convey sorrow. Her eyebrows are often downwards, reinforcing her expressiveness and understanding of what Riley is going through.

Proportions.

Sadness has a small, slightly chubby proportion, which is shorter compared to other characters like joy. Her hunched posture makes her look weighed down by emotion, depicting how the emotion of sadness can feel. Which contrasts highly with that of joy.

Silhouette:

Sadness's silhouette is rounded. Inward curving form, with minimal motion. These features of the character shows lack of interest in participation and low confidence. Her sweater bulges slightly over her rounded belly, and her hair droops down around her face, symbolising she is embedded with emotions.

4.2.6. BAYMAX:

Shape:

The design of Baymax is curated using rounded, soft, and inflated shapes, his body resembles a balloon with no sharp edges or angularity. These rounded soft shapes convey the safety, comfort, and approachability which align with the role of Baymax as a health care companion.

Colour:

The whole character is coloured white, which is often associated with cleanliness and purity. As a medical robot, the colour used reflects his personality and the healing nature as a non-threatening figure at any point. The minimal use of colour conveys a friendly appeal that is not complex.

Facial features:

Baymax has minimal facial features with two dotted eyes connected with a line; this simplicity in the features depicts the space where people can share their emotions for healing in a safer space. Despite the minimal features, the expressions are conveyed through voice and gestures of other body parts.

Proportions:

Baymax has exaggerated body proportions, and the design is symmetrical, which makes the character look like an inflated balloon robotic structure. These proportions make him look simpler and huggable, who is supportive and soft.

Silhouette:

The silhouette of Baymax is simple but exaggerated and easily recognisable, a large, rounded body with small arms and legs. His simple design makes the character more memorable. His silhouette conveys gentleness and softness, differentiating Baymax from the other robotic characters with a design serving the narrative function as caregiver and fighter.

4.3. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS:

Through a comparative analysis of the chosen characters, the section examines how features like shape, colour schemes, silhouettes, proportion, and facial features are varied in the designs of protagonists, antagonists, and secondary characters to effectively portray their respective narrative roles. By studying the recurring patterns and contrasts through a comparative lens, the relevance of each feature in storytelling is analysed.

4.3.1. COMPARISON OF SHAPE USAGE ACROSS CHARACTER TYPES

Across the case studies, the protagonists (Moana, Miguel) designs usually consist of features like rounded shapes, warm and harmonious colour palette, open postures, and expressive facial features. Such soft features are associated with the approachable, friendly, and relatable behaviours of the character. For example, Moana's expressive facial features, stature, and earthy colour tones reflect her connection to nature and are rooted in her leadership qualities.

The antagonists like Jafar, Mother Gothel, and Yzma are built using angular shapes and exaggerated figures. Jafar's triangular silhouette and heart features with vertical elements evoke a sense of authoritative personality. Mother Gothel's curls and exaggerated facial features reflect her manipulative traits. Yzma, a comedic villain, uses extreme stylisation such as her thin limbs, exaggerated eyes, and asymmetrical angles to communicate her villainous personality.

Secondary characters like sadness and Baymax are of two different design extremes. Baymax is a round, inflated-shaped character suggesting calmness and approachability, whereas sadness is rounded with drooping curves, which show emotional heaviness.

Thus, the shape language acts as a shortcut to facilitate the communication of narrative roles using a distinct set of shapes for each role, like the sharp features often related to the antagonist where whereas the rounded and soft shapes symbolise the protagonist's characteristics.

4.3.2. COMPARISON BY COLOUR PALETTE

The palette used for the protagonist is dominated by warm and earthy tones. Moana's earthy colour tones are inspired by her ocean surroundings, and the plot shows the connection towards the ocean and culture. Miguel's red and white tones symbolise energy, passion, and the blues and brown express his roots to family and culture.

Jafar's deep colour palette with back and red connoted danger, whereas Mother Gothel's design uses burgundy, greens and muted golds to reflect vanity and manipulation. Thus, the designs of antagonists utilise a cooler and high-contrast colour palette.

Secondary characters also utilise a meaningful palette, like that of sadness is characterised by soft blues and grey that reflect the emotional theme of her personality. Baymas's design consists of a monochromatic white theme, suggesting safety and care.

The colour scheme used for each category of characters is specific and meaningful, such as warm tones for protagonists, whereas high contrast deep tones for villains and a mixed theme concerning the context in case of secondary characters.

4.3.3. COMPARISON BY FACIAL FEATURES

When we compare each narrative role's facial features and expressiveness, we can see a clear difference. Miguel and Moana have wide-set eyes and full cheeks, which are highly expressive features that can communicate emotions through facial gestures. The antagonist's facial elements are exaggerated, stylised, asymmetrical figures. Jafar's narrow eyes, arched brows and elongated face depict his cunningness, meanwhile, Mother Gothel's flawless skin, high cheekbones, and expressive brows show her passive aggression.

Among the secondary characters, Baymax has minimal facial features, and sadness's constantly downturned eyes and eyebrows visually reconfirm her emotions transparently.

The facial features used to curate each character are dependent on the respective roles they play in the film.

4.3.4. COMPARISON BY PROPORTIONS

The protagonist's features tend to be balanced and readable proportions, such as Moana's athletic body stature and Miguel's smaller stature, resembling childlike proportions.

Villains exhibit exaggerated proportions like Jafar's long, thin body, which again reinforces the cunning traits, and Gothel's tall figure enhances her superior and dramatic presence.

Baymax has a balloon-like form with oversized, entire body proportions. Sadness's proportions with a small body and large head, with hunched posture, make her appeal childlike and emotional.

Each character's proportions align with the character's personality and the setting necessary to convey their nature. The protagonist's proportions are usually balanced and readable, but the antagonist, in contrast, has proportions that are asymmetric and exaggerated.

4.3.5. COMPARISON BY SILHOUETTE

Each character's silhouette plays a role in the recognisability of character design. Miguel's silhouette has a guitar, which highlights his interest in music. Moana's flowing hair and posture shows her strength. Jafar's tall, Gothel's hourglass body silhouette with thick hair presents her as a manipulative character.

Baymax's design holds one of the most memorable silhouettes, with an enraged, rounded silhouette. The silhouette of sadness is hunched, which communicates the emotional burden. Thus, the character design of each specific narrative role can be differentiated by analysing its silhouette structure, which is distinct for each type of character.

4.4. SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS:

The multi-layered analysis of the character designs chosen and their features to study their contribution in enhancing the storytelling by effectively expressing the emotions and narrative roles. The formal analysis revealed the strategies used to develop character types. The contextual analysis further grounded these features, and their symbolic meanings were conveyed in the context of the story. Finally, the comparative analysis, the repeating pattern across the character roles, where the protagonist and secondary character emphasise approachability, whereas villains were portrayed with angular and asymmetrical features.

Overall analysis demonstrates the importance of shape, colour, silhouette, facial features, and proportion in facilitating storytelling by conveying specific meanings to the audience, which makes the character design a fundamental part of the narrative arc.

5. PRACTICAL DEMONSTRATION

This practical demonstration aims to develop character designs with features that are associated with the storyline. The main objective is to create the character by thoughtfully using features such as shape, colour, proportions, facial features, and silhouette, that can distinguish between the different life stages and the plot without relying on any dialogue.

This demonstration represents the design of two versions of a character, the younger self, who is filled with joy and imagination, and his present-day scenario as an adult self who is burdened with monotonous corporate life. this demonstration will help to analyse the difference in design features used to depict a variety of characters with different personalities.

5.1. CHARACTER CONCEPT AND MOOD DESIGN:

The character is divided into two plots, each aligned with different visual and conceptual ideas to convey personality, mood, and narrative content.

- The **Adult Man** is portrayed as emotionally drained, rigid, stuck in a routine, in monotonous. He is surrounded by a dull and pale surrounding in office set up with no joy and no creativity.
- The **Childhood Self** represents innocence, curiosity, and no burdens of life with a playful and happy nature.

  This character depicts two different psychological scenarios. The design choices are crafted to demonstrate the visual difference, using the insights from the analysis using case studies in the previous sections of the paper.

5.2. VISUAL PRESENTATION

5.2.1. SCENARIO 1: THE PAST - A JOYFUL CHILD

Design Objective: Represent innocence, freedom, and emotional vibrance.

Visual Features:

Shape: Rounded forms conveying softness and playfulness.

Colour Palette: Bright, primary colours evoking warmth and happiness.

Facial Features: Expressive eyes, open smile, soft cheeks, and raised eyebrows, symbolising childlike curiosity.

Proportions: Enlarges the head to body ratio, chubby cheeks depicting childlike proportions.

Silhouette: Energetic, dynamic, slightly asymmetrical

Figure 7: Child Character.

Figure 8: Annotation sheet of the child character.

Figure 9: Character Model Sheet of the Child Character.

5.2.2.   SCENARIO 1: THE PRESENT - A TIRED CORPORATE MAN

Design Objective: Depict tiredness, monotony, and unpleasantness.

Visual Features:

Shape: Rectangular forms, which reflect rigidity and emotional restriction.

Colour Palette: Muted greys, dull blues, and dull tones suggesting routine and lifelessness.

Racial features: Droopy eyelids, low eyebrows, indicating a drained-out feeling.

Proportions: Slightly hunched, with elongated torso and stiff limbs showing exhaustion.

Silhouette: Narrow and boxy, reflecting the theme of restriction.

Figure 10: Adult Man Character.

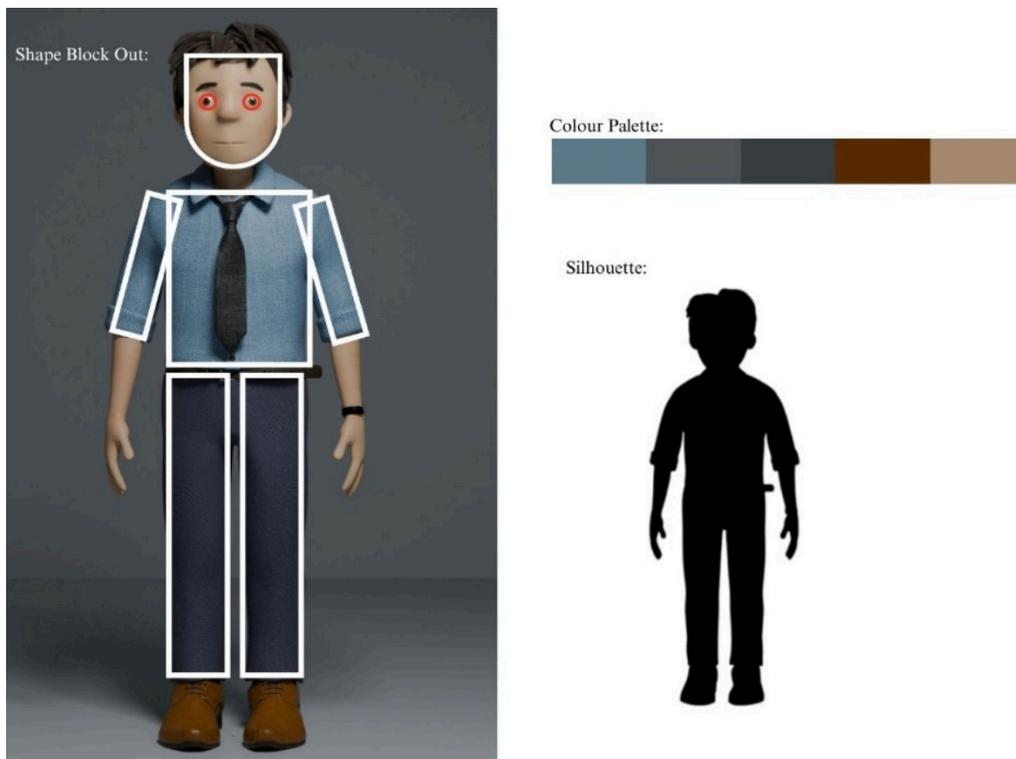Figure 11: Annotation Sheet of the Adult Man Character.

Figure 12: Character Model Sheet of the Adult Man Character.

5.3. DESIGNER'S REFLECTION

5.3.1. Child Character: Reflective Statement

This character of a child was designed to depict the contrasting personality to that of the adult self. The character is composed of rounded shapes, primary colours, and childlike proportions with expressive facial features to enhance and show the innocence and emotional vibrance. The character represents the joyful and hopeful young self, which is the counterpart of the adult self.

5.3.2. Adult Character: Reflective Statement

The adult characters' design reflects the emotional exhaustion and monotonous adult working life with no vibrance. The curved yet boxed structure, hunched posture was deliberately incorporated to convey the burdened feeling out of his busy yet boring corporate work life. The muted blues and greys, downturned eyes show the suppressed emotions. The objective was to design a middle-aged man who is not happy with his work life, with symbolisations of his dullness.

5.4. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF DESIGNED CHARACTERS

Table 7: Semiotic analysis of the features of the character of the Child (designed).

Feature	Denotation	Connotation
Shape	Round face, circular eyes, and curved torso with smooth limbs.	Innocence, playfulness
Colour	Yellow t-shirt, blue jumpsuit, red cap, shoes, and socks	Energy, positivity, emotional vibrance
Silhouette	Dynamic and outward posture	Freedom, enthusiasm.
Facial Features	Rounded eyes, chubby cheeks, and raised brows with a wide smile	Expressiveness, curiosity, and openness.
Proportion	Enlarged head-to-body ratio, short limbs, and torso.	Cuteness and developmental stages.

Table 8: Semiotic analysis of the features of the character of the Adult (designed).

Feature	Denotation	Connotation
Shape	Rectangular body with soft edges.	Rigidity and monotony.
Colour	Muted blues and greys, pale tones.	Lifeless routine
Silhouette	Compact and boxy, downward posture.	Emotional burden
Facial Features	Droopy eyes, tight mouth, low eyebrows.	Exhaustion, passive nature.
Proportion	Elongated torso, hunched shoulders, and stiff limbs.	Disconnection and exhaustion.

5.5. DESIGN OUTCOME ANALYSIS

This practical demonstration reinforces the semiotic value of the design features, which reflect the internal emotional state of the character alongside their narrative role. The designs alone, without any animation or dialogues, could communicate the concept behind the design is depicted through the features like Shape, Colour, Silhouette, Proportion, and Facial Features. These outcomes highlight the argument that these features inevitably convey narrative value beyond their visual beauty. With the

semiotic analysis, the design decisions could be analysed effectively to reinforce the literal and symbolic meaning in a structured format.

Figure 13: Depiction of different emotional stages of the same character.

6. FINDINGS

The three-stage semiotic analysis (formal, contextual, and comparative) of the selected animated characters and practical demonstration outcomes. The study aimed to examine the specific visual features that contribute to the narrative through the character design. The findings through the study interpreted recurring design patterns across the characters and their narrative roles to enhance the storytelling.

6.1. VISUAL FEATURES AND THEIR NARRATIVE FUNCTIONS:

The formal analysis of all the character designs using semiotic analysis tables, discovering the denotative and connotative meanings of each character design feature, like shape, colour, facial feature, proportion, and silhouette. These features nonverbally indicate the personality and narrative role of the character. The characters like Moana and Miguel are created using rounded shapes, warm colour palettes, well-balanced proportions, with expressive facial features.

These visual elements communicated approachability and emotional openness. In contrast, the design features of villain characters like Jafar and Mother Gothel are sharp angular shapes, darker or contrasting colour combinations, with exaggerated asymmetry in their proportions and silhouette. These elements help to emphasise the tension and threat, which helps to reinforce the antagonistic traits.

The secondary characters, such as sadness from inside out, and Baymax, are composed of simplified elements. Sadness's design consists of the droopy features and soft colours symbolising her emotional weight, and the simple, fully rounded body proportions with minimal designs in a monochrome colour scheme depict his comfort, safety, and huggable nature. The designs of secondary characters are based on the film's theme.

6.2. CHARACTER DESIGN FEATURES AND THEIR SYMBOLISM IN NARRATIVE CONTEXT:

In the contextual analysis of the characters, the significance of the specific features to the narrative is explained.

The protagonist's character designs were identified as having designs that reflect their growth in the narrative arc. Miguel's vibrant colour palette and musical inspirations in his silhouette symbolise his aspirations and cultural bonding. Moana's flowing hair and athletic stature depict her as a voyager and leader. These elements signify the character's self-discovery and their cultural grounding.

The design features of antagonist designs can foreshadow their negative inner cunnings, like that of the design of Mother Gothel's elegance in the external features covers her internal toxicity, meanwhile the Jafar's staff and vertical stiffness reinforced his greed for hypnotic control and authoritative dominance. This is where the designs reflect in in-depth intentions of the characters.

The curation of secondary characters is based on the symbolic elements of emotional aspects and the theme of the film. The design of Sadness emphasises the film's emotional exploration of mental health. Baymax served as a non-complex and caring robot supporting the narration's caregiving function, which the design had to function for.

6.3. COMPARATIVE PATTERNS ACROSS THE NARRATIVE ROLES OF THE FEATURES OF CHARACTER:

The comparative analysis of the characters could identify the distinct design pattern across different design roles again. The protagonist's design had balanced visuals and expressive features to enhance the audience's resonance and exhibit the emotional complexities of the film. Their silhouettes are distinctive and easily recognisable.

The antagonist features utilise high contrast and bold designs to echo the dominant traits that the character portrays, with exaggerations and asymmetry to signify the danger and manipulation. Secondary character designs are symbolic devices with minimal yet emotionally connectable features that align with the narrative arc seamlessly.

6.4. PRACTICAL DEMONSTRATION INSIGHTS:

The practical demonstration helped to validate the patterns found through the analysis by representing the different emotional and mental states of the same originally designed character. The contrasting features utilised in the adult as well as the child's design features, like boxed and rounded shapes, pale and bright colours respectively for adult and child characters, align with the narrative theme of contrasting life scenarios.

6.5. SEMIOTICALLY INTERPRETED PATTERNS:

The semiotic study by treating the design as signs and decoding their functions helps to delve deep into the emotional tone and narrative significance of the character's design. The signs of harmony, softness, and connectivity are mainly used to build the protagonist designs, the features of the antagonist signal danger, manipulation, and threat, whereas the secondary characters convey the interpretations of joy, empathy, or any emotion that resonates with the theme of the film and their role in it.

Overall, the findings affirm that the features of animated character designs are efficient tools that enhance storytelling by helping the viewer interpret the narrative role and function of each character in the narrative.

7. DISCUSSION

The study delves deep into the visual features of animated character designs and their invaluable contribution as narrative devices to communicate the character's significance in the film. The character-specific semiotic analysis and the combination of formal, contextual, and comparative analysis lay the foundation for interpreting the features of character design concerning the narrative context of the film. The practical demonstration further enhanced the study by applying the theoretical insights. The research aimed to study the narrative value that the features of character design hold beyond the aesthetic value and their major role in engaging the audience throughout. The findings could prove that features like shape, colour, proportion, silhouette, and facial features function as indicators of the narrative roles through semiotic interpretations.

The findings of the study suggest that the visual features can influence the way the audience interprets the way the character and story are perceived by the audience. For example, the designs consisting of rounded shapes, warm colour palettes, and balanced proportions used for protagonists like Migue and Moana help the design to communicate the narrative and emotional arc of the story to the viewers. Whereas the visual tension and dangerous traits of the antagonists are signified using features like sharp angles, highly contrasting colours, and misaligned proportions. The minimalism and thematic influence of the film on the curation of secondary characters' designs are choices that reinforce the logic of using this structured pattern in the development of a character that must play a certain role, which makes it more efficient to communicate the idea and keep the audience in anticipation.

Considering the existing literature related to the present study, these insights derived from the study of character-based as well as narrative role-based patterns extend the theories that are established related to character design in animation and visual storytelling. The foundational literature, like The Illusion of Life by Thomas and Johnston (Thomas & Johnston, 1981), provides a strong base for the study by explaining the appeal of each design and interpreting the features are tools for visual expressions rather than as a semiotic sign. This study emphasises the semiotic value of the design features, such as Barthes' denotation and connotation model, which distinctly explains the interpretational dimension of the visual features in character design. The contrasting representation of the same character's different psychological state using the appropriate combination of design features, only using the visual representation and no dialogues, adds to the value of meaning that the design has in the narration, where the themes of emotional fatigue, childlike curiosity are portrayed through the symbolic use of features in the design.

The implications of the findings from the study are relevant for both academic domains and professional practices related to character design. The study provides a structured methodology for decoding meaning in the visual character designs through features and their connoted meaning, reassuring the significance of semiotic analysis in the visual and animated study for research scholars. The professionals, like character designers, animators, and visual storytellers, can understand the importance that each small element or feature has in creating an impact using a complete character. Also, the design of the character can visually enrich and represent he emotional arc, symbolic role, and their narrative function through deliberate use of specific design features like shapes, colours, proportions, facial features, and proportions. This expands the role of a character designer to a narrative anchor.

Certain limitations that the study faced are, the analysis was limited to six characters and restricted to characters from the western animated movies. This shows the constraints in aspects like cultural scope, diverse styles, and audience engagement. Despite the detailed study using semiotic analysis, the lack of an audience reception study can lack of insights about audience perception. The future research studies can explore the audience-based studies, that asses the interpretation of the viewers. Cross-cultural studies can also investigate the semiotic value of design features.

Thus, the discussion confirms again that the character design features must be chosen wisely to depict a personality, which can strongly channelize the imagination and engagement of viewers.

8. CONCLUSION

This research explores the role of specific features of animated character designs in enhancing visual storytelling by using a character-specific semiotic analysis. Through formal, contextual, and comparative analysis of six animated characters: two protagonists, two antagonists, and two secondary characters, which is well supported using a practical demonstration by designing two original characters for a specific storyline, exploring diverse features for contrasting plots. These features in character design speak about the personality and emotional role without any dialogue and just through their visual language.

By applying the semiotic theory to both the characters chosen for the study as well as the originally designed characters, the study demonstrated that the design features symbolise the narrative elements of the story and emotionally engage the audience. The practical demonstration validated the study by visually communicating the contrasting emotional states of the same character. This study contributes to animation studies by affirming the narrative importance of character design features. Future studies have the prospect to expand on this study by including an audience perception study, opting for cross-cultural samples, etc. The study concludes by reaffirming that character designs are beyond the visual beauty, and it portrays the story and its narrative role primarily, which eventually helps to communicate with the audience instantly.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A1: Clay render of the Child Character model in A pose created for the practical demonstration.
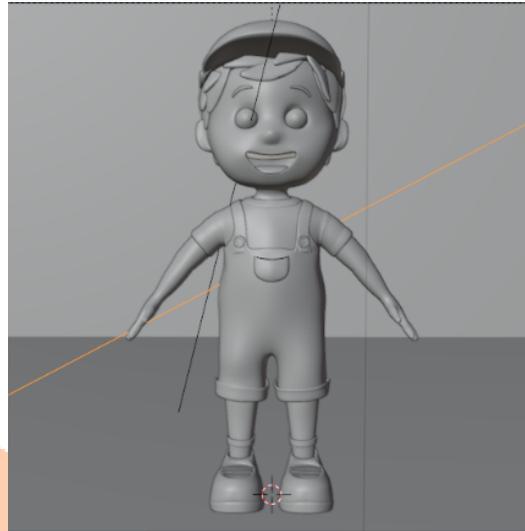
Appendix A2: Texturing process of the Child's character.

Appendix A3: Clay render of the Adult Man character model in A pose created for the practical demonstration.

Appendix A4: Texturing process of the Adult's character.